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ABSTRACT

A pictorial and statistical booklet on American Indians, this document briefly details the origins of the first Americans. It then gives current and comparative data for Indian population growth, residence areas, income, employment, education, and housing standards. The 10 largest tribes are listed, and a "new era" for American Indians is explained. (KM)

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WE, THE FIRST AMERICANS

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Buffalo Dancer, ca. 1930, by Monroe TsaToke, Kiowa.

About 30,000 years ago, archeologists and anthropologists say, our Indian ancestors left Siberia and came to a great new land. They spread across the vast wilderness of North America where most settled in what is now the United States. There are no traces of human life indicating that anyone preceded us.

And long before the white man touched our shores, we were the woodsmen of the eastern forests, hunters of the plains, northern fishermen, seed gatherers, shepherds, farmers, and desert dwellers.

So, both by exploration and circumstance, we are the native Americans.

THE PEOPLE, THE LAND

When the white man first came to what is now the United States we, the native Americans, were there to greet him. Our new neighbors considered our ways strange. His customs were strange to us.

We were a people whose love of the land was expressed in our dances, ceremonies, and folk tales. We sought spiritual guidance from natural forces such as the sun and stars, the winds, thunder and lightning, and lush green forests. We fished the streams and hunted across the great plains. And we took from the earth only what we needed for survival.

As these European settlers pushed westward from the original colonies, our people were uprooted from their ancestral lands. We were scattered and exhausted by disease and warfare with the advancing white man.

To this day, disputes over parts of the land are not completely settled. And neither the Indian nor the white man has been able to iron out all problems related to their different cultures as well as other differences.

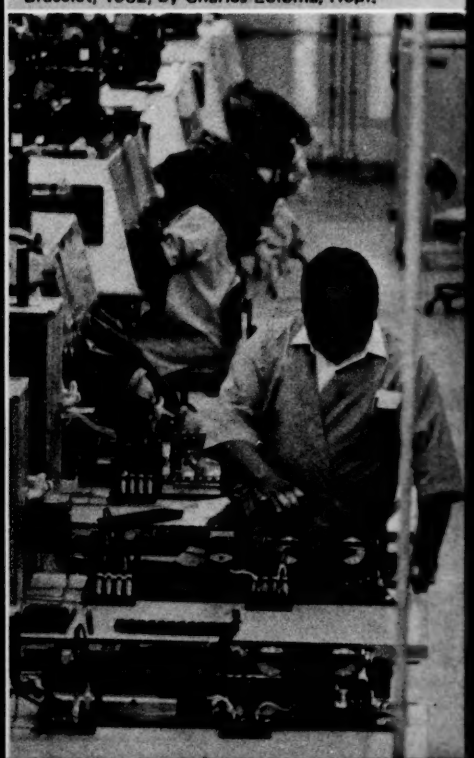
Hopi Snake Dance, ca. 1936, by Fred Kabotie, Hopi.

OUR CHANGING ROLE

A statistical portrait of our condition today shows that we, too, are caught up in the 20th century pace. We have adopted many of the white man's ways while retaining many of our own. However, we still lag behind the rest of the Nation in many social and economic aspects of life. Yet we have made some important advances and shown that we have the strength to grow more. For example:

Hair Ornament, 1965, by George Silverhorn, Kiowa.

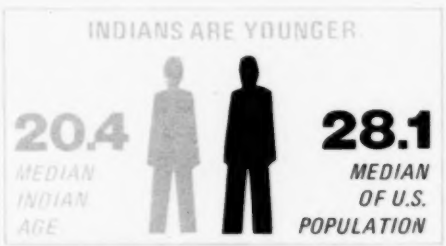
Bracelet, 1962, by Charles Loloma, Hopi.



We're becoming better educated. More than half our people between the ages of 3 and 34 were attending school in 1970. About 95 percent of our children 7 to 13 years old are in school now. Our enrollment in college has more than doubled since 1960.

Our population growth is above the national rate. Between the 1960 and 1970 censuses our population increased by 51 percent.

We're nearly eight years younger than the population as a whole. Our median age is 20.4 years—19.9 years for males, 20.9 for females. The national median age is 28.1.

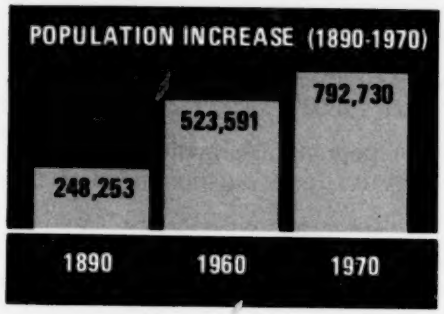


OUR NUMBERS ARE GROWING

On Census Day 1970, a total of 792,730 of us were counted. Our population totaled 523,591 in 1960. When the first complete count of us was made in 1890, we numbered 248,253. So our population has grown by 208 percent since then.

When the first U.S. census was taken in 1790, no mention was made of us whatever, and the next two censuses included all persons except "Indians not taxed." Between 1830 and 1850, censuses contained no specific mention of us.

Until 1930, except for 1910 when a special enumeration of Indians was made, data about us were gathered on an irregular basis. The 1960 and 1970 censuses were the only ones in which self-identification was the basis for enumerating the Indian population. They are considered the most accurate totals ever obtained.



Indian Population Growth: 1890 to 1970

1890	*248,253*
1900	*237,196*
1910	*276,927*
1920	*244,437*
1930	*343,352*
1940	*345,252*
1950	*357,499*
1960	*523,591*
1970	*792,730*

About 13 percent of our population belongs to the Navajo tribe which totaled 96,743 in 1970. Approximately 9 percent of us were members of the Cherokee tribe, and the Sioux (Dakota) and Chippewa tribes each made up about 6 percent of the total.

10 Largest Indian Tribes

Navajo	*96,743*
Cherokee	*66,150*
Sioux (Dakota)	*47,825*
Chippewa	*41,946*
Pueblo	*30,971*
Lumbee	*27,520*
Choctaw and Houma	*23,562*
Apache	*22,993*
Iroquois	*21,473*
Creek, Alabama and Coushatta	*17,004*

WHERE WE LIVE

We live in all sections of the country. However, more than half of us lived in just five States in 1970: Arizona, California, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Oklahoma. About 85 percent of us live in 18 States.

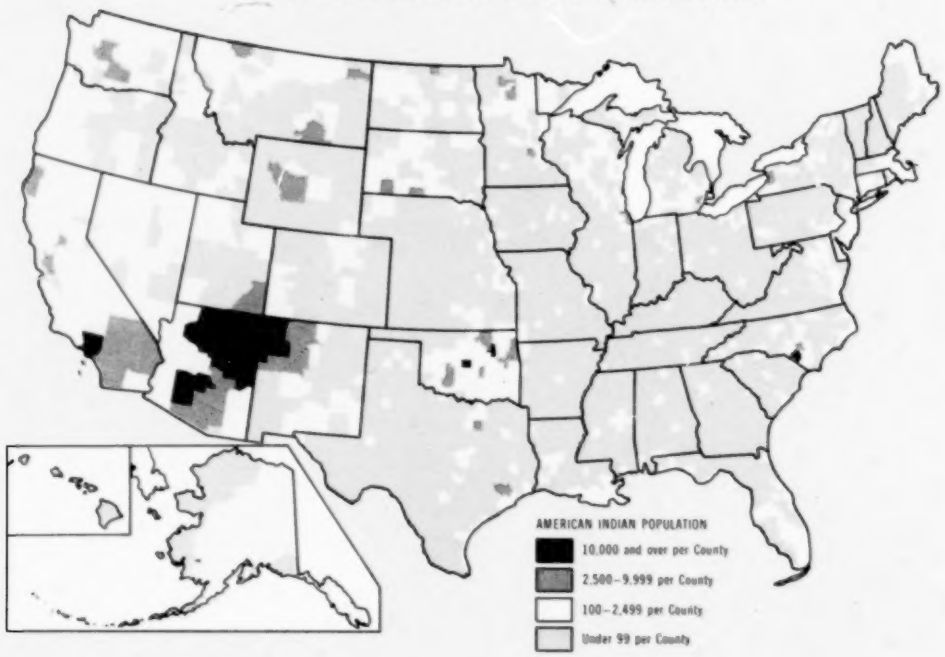
Nearly half our population—49.7 percent—is concentrated in the West. More than a fourth of us are in the South, almost a fifth in the North Central region, and about 5 percent in the Northeast.

Our people are leaving the reservations and rural areas for urban living in rapidly increasing numbers. In 1970, nearly half of us resided in urban areas; in 1960 the urban proportion was less than one-third.

Another 213,770, or 28 percent of us, lived on 115 major reservations which the Census Bureau identified in 1970. The remainder of us lived on smaller reservations and in rural areas.

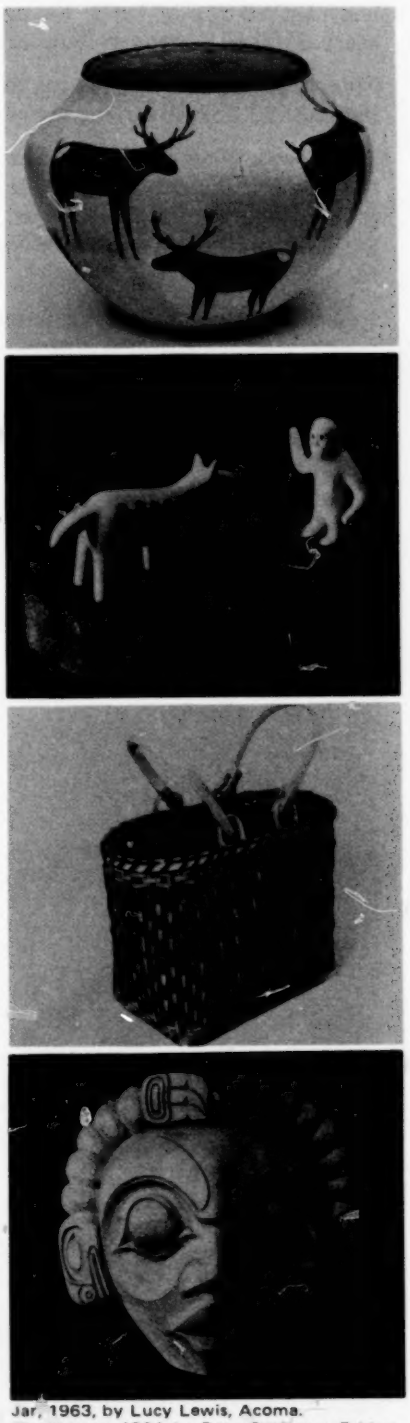
Some of us experience difficulty in adjusting to the pace and demands of big-city life just as some other persons of rural background do. In our case this probably reflects, at least to some degree, the differences between our culture and the white man's. But in general, the Indian who lives in metropolitan areas gets more education, a better job, better housing, and higher pay than his brothers on reservations and in rural areas.

CONCENTRATIONS OF INDIAN POPULATION



Indian Population By States: 1970 and 1960

	1970	1960
UNITED STATES	792,730	523,591
Alabama	2,443	1,276
Alaska	16,276	14,444
Arizona	95,812	83,387
Arkansas	2,014	580
California	91,018	39,014
Colorado	8,836	4,288
Connecticut	2,222	923
Delaware	656	597
Dist. of Columbia	956	587
Florida	6,677	2,504
Georgia	2,347	749
Hawaii	1,126	472
Idaho	6,687	5,231
Illinois	11,413	4,704
Indiana	3,387	948
Iowa	2,992	1,708
Kansas	8,672	5,069
Kentucky	1,531	391
Louisiana	5,294	3,587
Maine	2,195	1,879
Maryland	4,239	1,538
Massachusetts	4,475	2,118
Michigan	16,854	9,701
Minnesota	23,128	15,496
Mississippi	4,113	3,119
Missouri	5,405	1,723
Montana	27,130	21,181
Nebraska	6,624	5,545
Nevada	7,933	6,681
New Hampshire	361	135
New Jersey	4,706	1,699
New Mexico	72,788	56,255
New York	28,355	16,491
North Carolina	44,406	38,129
North Dakota	14,369	11,736
Ohio	6,654	1,910
Oklahoma	98,468	64,689
Oregon	13,510	8,026
Pennsylvania	5,533	2,122
Rhode Island	1,390	932
South Carolina	2,241	1,098
South Dakota	32,365	25,794
Tennessee	2,276	638
Texas	17,957	5,750
Utah	11,273	6,961
Vermont	229	57
Virginia	4,853	2,155
Washington	33,386	21,076
West Virginia	751	181
Wisconsin	18,924	14,297
Wyoming	4,980	4,020



Jar, 1963, by Lucy Lewis, Acoma.
The Hunter, 1964, by Peter Seeganna, Eskimo.
Basket, 1969, by Eva Wolfe, Cherokee.
Mask, 1964, by Lincoln Wallace, Tlingit.

OUR INCOME...

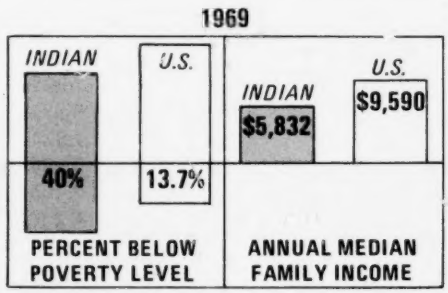
Our annual median family income—meaning half of our families earn more, half less—was $5,832 in 1969; for the population as a whole it was $9,590. Thus, for every $100 all American families earned, Indian families made about $61.

Those of us who live in the Northeast had the highest median family income—$7,437; it was lowest in the South at $5,624.

There were wide ranges in the amount of family income we earned during 1969. In 30 metropolitan areas where at least 2,500 of us lived in 1969, our median family income was as low as $3,389 (in Tucson, Arizona) and higher than $10,000 (in Detroit and Washington, D.C.)—higher than the median income figure for all U.S. families.

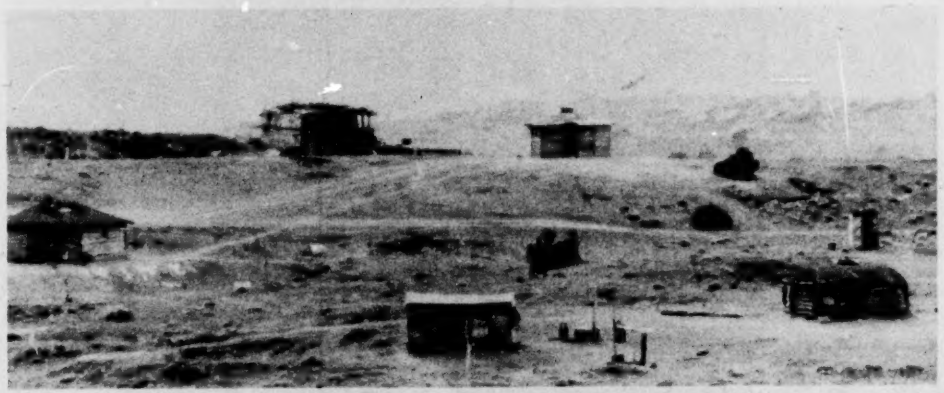
Reservation Indians did not fare as well. Their median family income ranged from a high of $6,115 on the Laguna Reservation in New Mexico down to $2,500 on the Papago Reservation in Arizona.

As American citizens we pay local, State and Federal taxes on our income the same as other citizens except where a treaty, agreement or statute exempts us. Most tax exemptions granted to us apply on lands held in trust for us and to income from such land.



Poverty is a major problem among us. Nearly 40 percent of us were living below the low-income or poverty level in 1969; the proportion was 13.7 percent for the total U.S. population. In Tucson, three-fifths of us were below the 1969 low-income level.

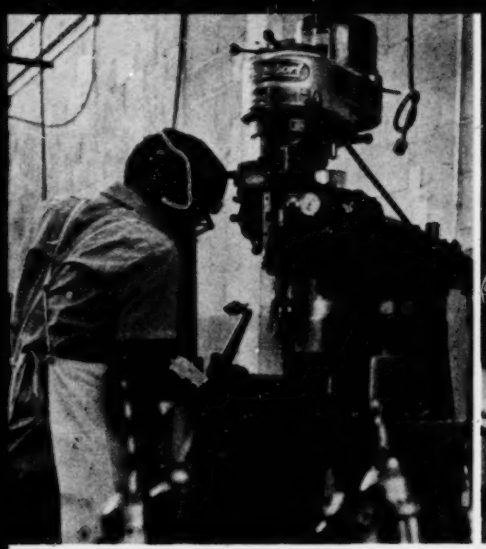
The proportion of poor Indians was nearly 80 percent on the Papago Reservation and nearly as high on others. One reason for this is that much of the Indian land on reservations is not productive enough to provide a living for the people it must support through farming, stockraising, or timber production. Other reasons are the lack of industrial or commercial jobs on or near reservations, the lack of capital to start new enterprises, and the need for more education and training to prepare Indians for better paying occupations.



...AND HOW WE EARN OUR LIVING

We earn our living in just about as many different ways as other Americans. Many of us tend to live close to the land on reservations—farming, ranching, and working at arts and crafts. In recent years there have been accelerated programs to establish industrial plants and commercial businesses there.

But 55 percent of us 16 years old and over who are employed work in urban areas, competing in the job mainstream. About 70 percent of Indian men work in four broad occupational groups: craftsmen and foremen, operatives, laborers, and service workers. Nine percent were in the professional and technical ranks in 1970. This was double the proportion in 1960.



About 70 percent of our working women 16 years old and over were in clerical, operative, and service jobs, and 11 percent worked at professional and technical occupations.

Major Occupational Groups in the Indian Population: 1970

Operatives, including transport	*41,631*
Service workers, except private household	*31,448*
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers	*27,303*
Laborers, except farm	*16,318*
Professional, technical, and kindred workers	*18,938*

Unemployment among us is an enormous problem. Our unemployment rate in 1970 was nearly three times the national average.

OUR EDUCATION IMPROVES

More of us are attending school and staying there longer than in previous years.

As previously mentioned, more than half of us between 3 and 34 years old were in school in 1970; 95 percent of our young between 7 and 13 were in the classrooms, and our college enrollment had more than doubled since 1960.

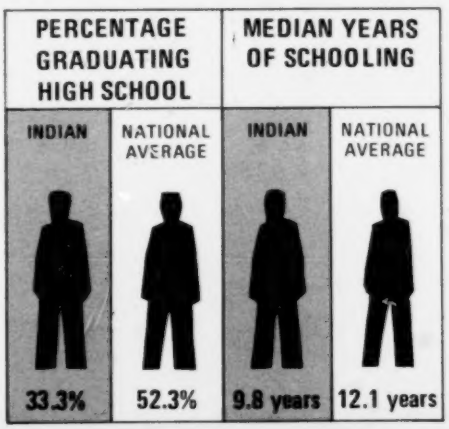
Nine out of 10 of our children attend public schools. The remainder attend private, mission, and Federal boarding or day schools.

In 1970, a third of our people 25 years old and over had completed high school; the proportion was considerably less than one-fifth in 1960. Median years of schooling for Indians was 9.8 in 1970, the same as for blacks. The national

median was 12.1 years, and 52.3 percent of the population as a whole had completed high school. More than 7 percent of us had 1 to 3 years of college training in 1970, compared to 4.0 percent in 1960. One-fourth of our males between 16 and 21 years old were school dropouts.

Indians living in Washington, D.C. ranked above the national average in both median number of school years completed and in the proportion of high school graduates. Our median years of schooling there was 12.6, and 66 percent of us were high school graduates in 1970.

In contrast, the median number of school years completed on the Navajo Reservation was 4.1, and only about 17 percent of persons 25 and over were high school graduates.



OUR FAMILIES, OUR HOMES

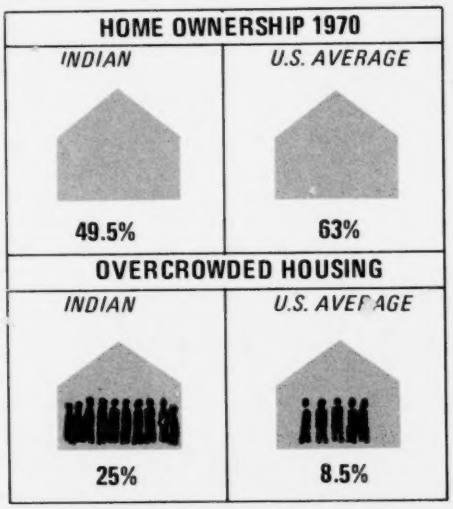
Indian families tend to be slightly larger than those of the population as a whole. Nearly one-fifth of them were headed by a female in 1970.

Nearly half of us—49.8 percent—lived in homes we either owned or were buying on Census Day 1970. This compares with a rate of 63 percent for the U.S. population.

A typical Indian family, both in urban areas and on reservations, lives in quarters built in 1939 or earlier. About 72 percent of our households have complete plumbing—that is, hot and cold piped water, an indoor toilet, and a bath for the exclusive use of individual households. For the population as a whole the proportion is 92 percent.

Overcrowding is a problem for us. Based on the census definition of "overcrowded" as "more than one person per room," more than a fourth of us live in overcrowded quarters. One person in 12 lives under similar circumstances in the total population.

About half our households had at least one automobile available to them in 1970, while more than a fifth had two or more. About four-fifths of the households in the population as a whole had at least one automobile available.



A NEW ERA

Impersonal though statistics may be they show us a picture of ourselves and how we compare with other Americans. Census data also help us pinpoint our needs and plan future courses of action.

President Nixon put his finger on the crux of our problems in a message he sent to Congress on July 8, 1970. In it he said:

"The first Americans—the Indians—are the most deprived and most isolated minority group in the Nation. On virtually every scale of measurement—employment, income, education, health—the condition of the Indian people ranks at the bottom."

Calling this circumstance the "heritage of centuries of injustice," he added that the time has come "to break decisively with the past and to create the conditions for a new era in which the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions."

Our history in the past few centuries has been written in the ability of us native Americans to endure and survive in the face of staggering obstacles.

We need these qualities to pass on to generations of us to come. But we must make sure that endurance and survival isn't our only destiny.

Photos appearing on pages 1, 2, 7, and, 12 were made available through the courtesy of the Department of the Interior, Indian Arts and Crafts Board.

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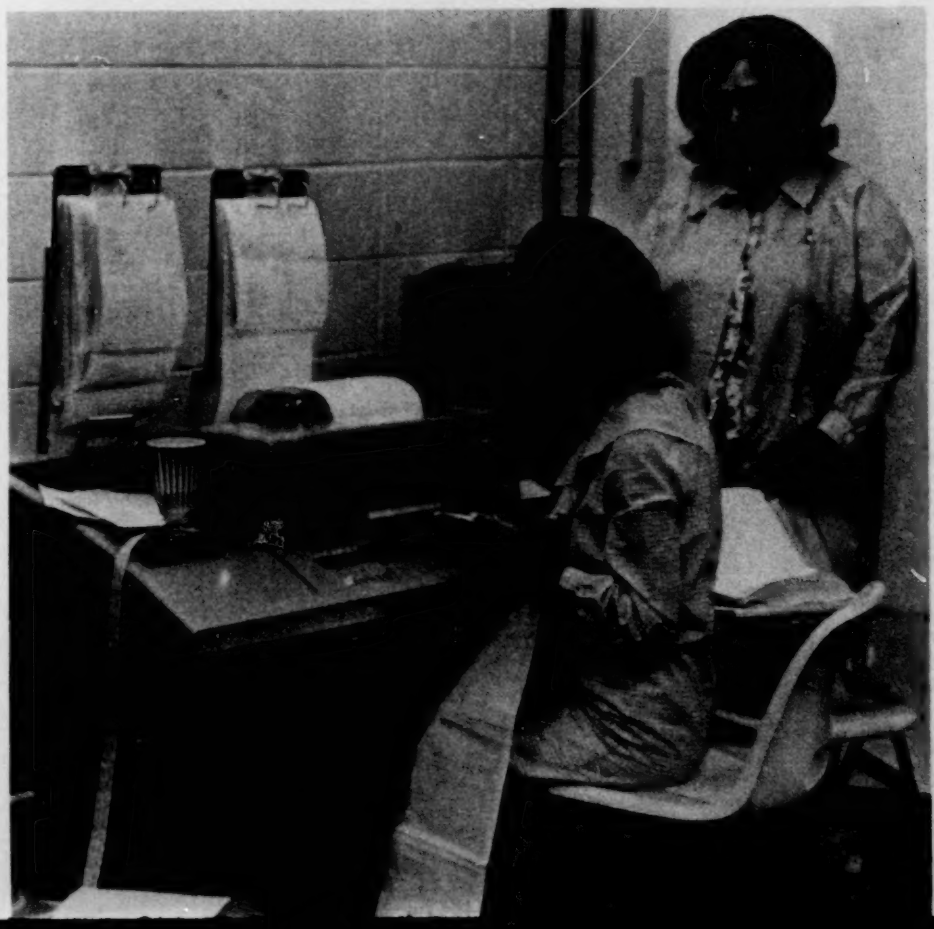

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